The Qur'an: Its Protection from Alteration

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Preface

The Qur'an is the basis of Islam and the eternal miracle of the Prophet of Islam. It is a Book which forms the main guide for the Muslims. Its vital place in Islam can be seen from the importance given to its preservation, in memory and written form, by the Prophet and his followers during past fourteen centuries of the history, of Islam.

No sect in the diversified world of Islam entertained any doubt about the authenticity and integrity of the Qur'an. Unfortunately, during the last fifteen years, some groups have started distributing booklets and leaflets in which they accuse the Shi'a Muslims of *kufr* because, in their assumptions the Shi'as do not believe in the integrity of the present Qur'an. How far this accusation is true, to what extent the accusers themselves are free from this "sin," and who eventually benefits from this *fitna* is the subject of this study done in a very unbiased way by 'Allamah Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi. This was first presented as a paper at the "Islamic Thought conference" in Tehran in January 1992. It is the pleasure of Ahlul Bayt Assembly of North America to present this booklet to the seekers of truth.

ABANA, Toronto, Canada

Introduction

The Qur'an is the eternal miracle and the living proof of the truth of Islam. It challenged the adversaries to bring its like, even a single chapter like its, if they thought that it was not from Allah. [1] The enemies failed to do so; and tried to extinguish the light of Islam by waging war after war, which incidentally still continues on many fronts and in several disguises.

The most important target of the enemies of Islam was and is the Qur'an, which they have been trying to disparage in one way or the other. For example: They said that the Prophet (peace be upon him & his progeny) had learnt these profound truths from some Jews or Christians! They claimed that there were contradictory statements in the Qur'an! They pontificated that the Qur'anic ethics fell far short of the "sublime ethical teachings" of the Christianity!

None of these claims could be sustained in the eyes of independent thinkers; the Muslims rebutted all such accusations. We have only to read the talk of Amirul-mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) with an atheist on the subject of the Qur'an, to see how the Imams of Ahlu 'l-bayt (who were the guardians of the Qur'anic truths according to the *hadith* of *thaqalayn*) defended the Qur'an and proved its pristine reality beyond any doubt.[2]

The purpose of this talk is to show that there was no *tahrif* in the Qur'an. The word *tahrif* may denote several meanings; however, what we are concerned with here is alteration or omission. It is our belief that there is no alteration in, addition to or omission from the Qur'an. Allah has clearly and emphatically declared that He Himself was the Protector of the Book:

Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We most surely are its Guardian. (15:9)[3]

In fulfillment of this promise, the Qur'an was collected in book form in the days of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) himself.

Both external evidence (from the sunnah) and internal evidence (from the Qur'an itself) have clearly established that the Prophet had left a Book in the hands of the Muslims. As for the internal evidence, there are at least fifty-two verses in which the Qur'an has been called a "Book".

As for the external evidence, the famous *mutawatir hadith* of *Thaqalayn* proves the existence of the Book during the last days of the Prophet (peace be upon him & his progeny). The *hadith* is narrated in scores of Shi'a and Sunni books with some minor variations in wordings, but the main parts are the same everywhere. I am quoting it from *Sahih Muslim*, where Zayd ibn Arqam mentions the Prophet's sermon in Ghadir Khumm:

"...And I am leaving among you two weighty things. First of them is the Book of Allah; in it is the guidance and the light; therefore take hold of it and adhere to it ... And (the second are) my Ahlu'l-bayt; I remind you of Allah concerning my Ahlu 'l-bayt, I remind you of Allah concerning my Ahlu'l-bayt, I remind you of Allah concerning my Ahlu 'l-bayt..."[4]

[Ed: Also see Hadith al-Thaqalayn: A study of its *tawatur*]

There are some other traditions (apart from the Ghadir sermon) in which the words "the Book of Allah and my traditions" have come. But the word, "Book of Allah" is present in both versions.

This sermon of Ghadir Khumm was delivered about two and a half months before the death of the Prophet and at that time there was a Book of Allah which the Prophet was leaving among his ummah and exhorting them to hold fast to it.

Then just a few days before his death, the Prophet (peace be upon him & his progeny) said:"...Come on, I will write for you a writing (because of which) you shall not go astray after me." But 'Umar said: 'Surely, the Messenger of Allah is overcome by pain, and you have got the Qur'an; the Book of Allah is sufficient for us..."[5]

It clearly shows that the Book of Allah was in the hands of Muslims before the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him & his progeny).

It is far-fetched to think that the word "Book" in the Qur'an, in the sermon of the Prophet, and in the statement of 'Umar was used for scattered pieces of paper, etc. The grand teacher of contemporary mujtahids, Sayyid al-Khu'i has rightly said after quoting the Qur'anic references and the ***hadith*** of ***Thaqalayn***: "...There is a clear proof that the Qur'an was then written and compiled, because the word 'book' is not used for that which is retained in the memory, nor for scattered writings on the parchments, pieces of papers and bones, except metaphorically. But it is not right to construe any word metaphorically unless there is an evidence in its context. The word 'book' denotes existence of a collection and not of scattered scribbles, nor of things which are in the memory but not written.[6]

The enemies of Islam from very early days had hit upon a plan which they thought would be very effective in weakening the belief in the authenticity and originality of the Qur'an. They looked at the prevailing condition of the Muslim world and found a ready and flourishing market for forged ***ahadith***. They exploited it to their utmost advantage and began wholesale fabrication of traditions casting aspersion on the validity of the Qur'an by imputing that there were additions, deletions, alterations and even some mistakes in this Qur'an which is in our hands.

This idea was and is diametrically opposed to what the Muslims, the Shi'a and the Sunni alike, believe about the Qur'an. Shaykh Abu Ja far as-Saduq (d. 381) writes in his ***Kitabu 'l-I'tiqadat***:

"It is our belief that the Qur'an which Allah revealed to His Prophet Muhammad is (the same as) the one between the two boards (***daffatayn***). And it is that which is in the hands of the people, and is not greater in extent than that."

Then he says:

"And he who asserts that we say that it is greater in extent than this (the present text) is a liar."[7]

Similar declarations have been made by almost all great Shi'a mujtahids; for example, Shaykh al-Mufid (338-413), ***Awa'ilu l-Maqalat***, p. 95; Sharif al-Murtada (355-436), ***Bahru 'l-Fawa'id*** (Tehran, 1314) p. 69; Shaykh at-Tusi (385-408), ***Tafsir at-Tibyan***, vol. 1 (Najaf, 1376) p. 3; Shaykh at-Tabrasi (d. 548), ***Majma'u 'l-Bayan***, vol. 1 (Lebanon) p. 15.

This belief has continued un-interrupted upto the present days. One may just mention the names of Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin al-'Amili (1284-1371); Sayyid Sharafu'd-Din al-Musawi (1290-1377); Shaykh Muhammad Husayn

Kashifu 'l-Ghita' (1295-1373); Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim (1306- 1390); 'Allamah at-Tabataba'i (1321- 1402) Sayyid Muhammad Hadi al-Milani (1313-1390); Sayyid Ruhullah al-Khumayni (1321 - 1409); Sayyid Abu 'l-Qasim al-Khu'i (1317-1413) and Sayyid Muhammad Rida al-Gulpaygani (1316-1414).

I would like to give short hints on the following six aspects of this topic, to show how the enemies of islam got the chance to create the *fitnah* of *tahrif* and to what extent they succeeded in their endeavours.

1. The appearance of forged *ahadith* in the Muslim world.

2. Confessions of some of those who indulged in this practice.

3. Examples of forged *ahadith* showing that hundreds, if not thousands, of verses were deleted from the Qur'an.

4. Sunni attitude and their belief. The theory of abrogation of recitation and its implication.

5. Shi'a attitude towards such traditions

6. American Islam resurrected this buried topic, ostensibly to ridicule Shi'ism and hinder Iranian efforts for establishing Islamic unity world-wide. But what was its real motive?

Obviously the time does not allow to go into details. Therefore, I propose only to mention briefly these topics in this talk.

Appearance of Forged Ahadith

It is a most tragic fact that people had started attributing forged traditions to the holy Prophet (peace be upon him & his progeny) even during his life time. The Prophet had to warn the Muslims of this *fitnah* in these words:

"Surely there are many who forge lie against me, and their number is sure to increase; whoever intentionally tells a lie against me should prepare his abode in the Fire. Therefore, whenever a *hadith* is narrated to you, put it (for testing) before the Book of Allah and my (established) sunnah, and whatever conforms with the Book of Allah, take it; and what goes against the Book of Allah and my sunnah, reject it."[8]

This well-known *hadith* is very important and I request you to keep it in mind. We should realize that the Prophet has appointed the Qur'an as the standard for judging a *hadith*, not that the Qur'an is to be judged by *ahadith*.

Amiru 'l-mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) was asked as to why there were differences in the traditions attributed to the Prophet. In reply, he said, "Certainly what is current among the people is both right and wrong, true and false, repealing and repealed, general and particular, definite and indefinite, exact and surmised. Even during the Prophet's days false sayings had been attributed to him, so much so that he had to say during his sermon that 'Whoever attributes falsehood to me makes his abode in Hell'. Those who relate traditions are of four categories, no more."

Then the Imam said that the first category was of the lying hypocrites: "The hypocrite is a person who makes a show of faith and adopts the appearance of a Muslim; he does not hesitate in sinning nor does he keep aloof from vice; he willfully attributes false sayings to the Messenger of Allah-may Allah bless him and his progeny. If people knew that he was a hypocrite and a liar, they would not accept anything from him and would not confirm what he says. But they say that he is a companion of the Prophet, has met him, heard (his sayings) from him and acquired (knowledge) from him. They, therefore, accept what he says. Allah too had warned you well about the hypocrites and described them fully to you. They have continued after the holy Prophet.[9]

However, the situation became worse after the martyrdom of Imam 'Ali (a.s.), when amir Mu'awiyah established what may be called the first propaganda department in the world. It is not the place to go into sordid details. Those who wish to know more may see the *Sharh Nahji 'l-Balaghah* of Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid al-Mu'tazili, who quotes verbatim from *Kitabu 'l-Ahdath* of Abu 'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Sayf al-Mada'ini, showing how this department developed stage by stage until the *ahadith* fabricated by them permeated the whole Muslim world; these '*ahadith* were taught to the children in *maktabs* like the Qur'an. He mentions how the malady had affected all groups and especially those who showed piety, recited the Qur'an, and were thought to be very God-fearing. They used to forge *ahadith* to seek favours with the rulers. Finally these '*ahadith*' reached those who were really religious-minded and did not approve of lie and false attribution. They accepted the traditions as genuine and transmitted them thinking that they were genuine sayings of the Prophet.[10]

Four narrators of *ahadith* were the core of that department: Abu Hurayrah, Amr bin al-'As, al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah (all from the sahabah, companions) and 'Urwah bin az-Zubayr (from the tabi'in, disciples of the companions).[11] But there were hundreds of free-lancers who sold their religion for worldly gains. One incident is given here as an example.

Mu'awiyah once offered Samurah ibn Jundab one hundred thousand dirhams if he would narrate that the verse 204-205 of the second chapter of the Qur'an were revealed concerning 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and that the verse 207 was revealed in praise of Ibn Muljam (the assassin of 'Ali).

The verses are as follows: "*And among men is he whose speech about the life of this world causes you to wonder, and he calls on Allah to witness as to what is in his heart; yet he is the most violent of adversaries. And when he turns back, he runs along in the land that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock, and Allah does not love mischief-making.*" These were to be attributed to 'Ali.

And the verse 207 which says "*And among men is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is affectionate to the servants*" was to be attached to Ibn Muljam.

However, Samurah did not agree. The price was raised to two hundred thousand and then to three hundred thousand, but to no avail. Finally Mu'awiyah offered him four hundred thousand dirhams, and Samurah agreed and narrated a '*hadith*' to that effect.[12]

Confessions of Some Forgers

Unfortunately, as mentioned above, even supposedly good people indulged in this forgery. Abu Ismah, Faraj bin Abi Maryam al-Marwazi was asked: "From where have you got all these traditions narrated through 'Ikrimah, from Ibn 'Abbas, from the Prophet, describing the reward of reciting each and every surah (chapter) of the Qur'an?" He said, "I found people interested only in the fiqh of Abu Hanifah and maghazi of Ibn Ishaq; therefore, I forged these ahadith 'for the pleasure of God' to bring them back to the Qur'an."[13]

Once forgery of ahadith became the norm of the Muslim academic world, the atheists, zanadiqah, and hypocrites exploited it to their full advantage. They introduced thousands of ahadith all supposed to come down through well-known companions of the Prophet to destroy the fabric of Islam, to weaken its foundation and bring down the whole edifice. For example, the well-known atheist, 'Abdu 'l-Karim ibn Abi 'l-'Awja', was sentenced to death by the governor of Kufa. When he was about to be killed, he said, "Well, even if you kill me, I have fabricated four thousand ahadith turning halal into haram and haram into halal. By God, I have made you to break fast on the day of fasting and to fast on the day of 'Id."[14]

But this plan could not succeed unless the Muslims were made to believe that the Qur'an was not collected during the Prophet's time, but was later collected piecemeal from papers, shreds of pottery and bones, some twenty three years after the Prophet's death.

They understood very well the psychology of various groups of the Muslims, and they presented their anti-Qur'anic themes disguised as a distinction (fazilat) of the sahabah (the companions) and the Imams of Ahlu 'l-bayt in order to mislead the Sunnis or the Shi'as, respectively. The poison was administered in sherbet and it was unhesitatingly swallowed.

The distinction of collecting the Qur'an was given to Hazrat Abu Bakr or Hazrat 'Uthman. Every fabricator has used his own imagination and it resulted in a lot of traditions contradictory to each other.

Sayyid al-Khu'i has reviewed in detail all the traditions concerning the later days collection of the Qur'an, and has come to the conclusion that the third Caliph had not "collected" the Qur'an. What he had done was to unite the Muslims on the recital which was followed in Medina, and forbid all other recitals, which had sprung up here and there. Those interested to study this in depth should refer to his al-Bayan from p. 187 to p. 278.

However, once this story of later days collection was established it was easy to circulate ahadith showing that a lot of verses, even some surahs, were lost and could not be found at the time when Hazrat Abu Bakr and/or Hazrat 'Uthman wanted to collect it in Book form. They attributed such statements to great companions and wives of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him & his progeny).

Mesmerized by those traditions, the Muslims forgot that Allah Himself is the Protector of His Book and that the Prophet had appointed the Qur'an as the standard to test the authenticity of traditions. They turned the table and began testing the authenticity of the Qur'an through those alleged ahadith!

Some Ahadith of Omission

It is not possible to give detail of all the verses, sentences and phrases which allegedly were lost at the time the Qur'an was collected. A few glaring examples are as follows:

1. *The thirty-third chapter of the Qur'an, **al-Ahzab**,* is alleged to have contained 200 or nearly 300 verses, all of which except 73 are said to have been lost. The claim of 200 verses is attributed to Ummu 'l-mu'minin, 'A'ishah. "It has been narrated by Abu 'Ubayd in ***al-Fada'il*** and by Ibn al-Anbari and Ibn Mardawayh from Aishah that she said, 'The ***surah*** al-Ahzab was recited in the days of the Prophet two hundred verses, but when 'Uthman wrote the Qur'an, he was unable to find more than what is there at present."[15] Now there are only 73 verses in this *surah*.

Hudhayfah is said to claim that 70 verses of this chapter were lost.[16] But Ubayy ibn Ka'b is made to say that this ***surah*** was equal to, or even bigger than the second chapter al-Baqarah.[17] Also, 'Ikrimah (a ***tabi'i***, disciple of the companions) has reportedly said the same.[18] Now the chapter al-Baqarah contains 286 verses. It means accordingly that 213 or even more verses were lost, including the verse of stoning.

2. *The ninth chapter, **at-Tawbah***: It is alleged that two-thirds or three-fourths of this ***surah*** has been lost. This report is attributed to Hudhayfah al-Yamani.[19] Imam Malik ibn Anas was asked as to why there is no "***Bismillah***" in this *surah*. He said, "It was lost with its earlier parts, because it is confirmed that it was equal to *surah* al-Baqarah in length."[20]

But there are only 129 verses in this *surah* of the Qur'an.

3. Then come the putetic ***surahs*** of ***al-Hafd*** and ***al-Khal'*** which were recorded by such famous companions as Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari[21] and which the caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab used to recite in his ***qunut***.[22] The ***surah***s were as follows:

This English booklet is not the place to show the absurdity of the sentences in these alleged ***surahs***. Some grammatical mistakes in them clearly show that the people who fabricated them did not know Arabic well. And these incorrect sentences have been attributed to such Arab companions as Hazrat Umar, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari!

Anyone interested to see the mistakes and absurdities of these supposed ***surah***s, is advised to see my Arabic booklet ***Nazaratun Musta'jilah fi mas'alati Tahrifi 'l-Qur'an*** or better still, Shaykh Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi's ***Ala'u 'r-Rahman fi Tafsiri 'l-Qur'an*** (vol. 1 [Beirut], pp. 23-24).

4. *A surah equal to the ninth chapter **al-Bara'ah***: Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, a companion of the Prophet, is reported to say, 'We used to recite a ***surah*** which we likened to ***al-Bara'ah*** in length and severity; but I forgot it, and now remember only this verse:

(If a son of Adam had two valleys full of wealth he would still covet a third; and nothing can fill the stomach of a man except dust.)[23]

5. *Yet another Surah*: The same companion is reported to say, "We used to recite a ***surah*** which we likened to one of the ***musabbihat***;[24] but I forgot it; yet I remember this 'verse' from it:

(O you who believe! Why do you say what you do not do? As it would be recorded as an evidence against you and then you shall be asked about it on the day of resurrection.)[25]

6. Loss of the major part of the Qur'an: There are a lot of traditions in Sunni books which show that the Qur'an was much much more than what the Muslims have in their hands. "At-Tabarani has narrated with trustworthy chain of narrators from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab that he said, 'The Qur'an is one million and twenty seven thousand letters..."[26] But the total of the letters in the whole Qur'an is not more than 267,053 as is recorded at the end of many editions of the Qur'an. In other words, three-fourth of the Qur'an was lost!

And the companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar is reported as saying, "None of you should ever say, 'I have got the whole Qur'an.' And what would make you know what the whole Qur'an was. Certainly a lot of Qur'an has gone. One should rather say, 'I have got what has appeared from it.'"[27]

Unfortunately the '*ahadith*' of major or minor deletions are attributed to many famous personalities of Islam, like Ummu 'l-mu'minin 'A'ishah, Ummu 'l-mu'minin Hafsah, Ummu 'l-mu'minin Umm Salimah, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, Abdu'r-Rahman ibn 'Awf, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Zayd ibn Arqam, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, Buraydah, Maslamah ibn Makhlad, Abu Waqid al-Laythi, and the aunt of Abu Amamah ibn Sahl, in addition to the tabi'in (disciples of the companions) 'Ikrimah and Imam Malik ibn Anas. These traditions are found in all well-known Sunni books of traditions, including *as-Sihahas-Sittah* (the six correct books of traditions): *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, *Sahih at-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan an-Nasa'i*, *Sunan al-Bayhaqi*, *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Muwatta'* of Imam Malik, *Ta'rikh* of al-Bukhari, *Fathu 'l-Ba'ri* (Sharh *Sahih al-Bukhari*) of Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Kanzu 'l-'Ummal* of Mulla 'Ali al-Muttaqi, *Tafsir ad-Durru'l-Manthur* and *al-Itqan* of As-Suyuti, *Jami'u 'l-Usul*, *al-Muhadarat* of Imam ar-Raghib al-Isfihani, *Jami 'u 'l-Jawami*, *Hilyatu 'l-awliya*' of Hafiz Abu Nu'aym and *al-Mustadrak 'alas-Sahihayn* of Imam al-Hakim an-Nishapuri.[28]

Also '*ahadith*' were attributed to the Imams of Ahlu 'l-bayt too, and they found their way into Shi'a books of traditions. In short the Sunni and Shi'a books of *ahadith* contain a lot of such traditions. But there is a basic difference between the two sects' respective attitude towards such traditions.

The Sunni Attitude

Our Sunni brethren's attitude towards such *ahadith* is influenced by their belief that the traditions of *as-sihah as-Sittah* (the six correct books of traditions), and especially those found in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim are all correct. Imam an-Nawawi writes in *Sharh Sahih Muslim*:

"The fact that the ummah has willingly accepted [the *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*] has led us to the opinion that it is obligatory (*wajib*) to act on what is written in these two [books], and this is an unanimously agreed view. People are obliged to act on a *khabaral-wahid* (a *hadith* reported by a single narrator) found in other books only when its chain of narrators is correct; and even then it would not create but only a strong assumption. And the same applies to the two *Sahihs*; but these two differ from the other books in that all that is in these two is correct and there is no need to examine them; rather it is *wajib* to follow them unconditionally. But as for the *ahadith* in other books, they will not be followed until their credentials are checked and they are found to fulfil the conditions of a correct *hadith*."

This unconditional blanket acceptance of the *ahadith* found in these books has compelled our Sunni brothers to accept the theory of abrogation of recital (*naskhut-tilawah*); that is, they believe that recital of some verses was abrogated although the law contained in some of them continues. Two well-known examples of such supposed verses are the so-called verses of stoning (*rajm*) and of ten or five sucklings, which are found in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* and other books.[29]

And the *hadith* of *Sahih Muslim* explicitly says:

"Ummu 'l-mu'minin 'Aisha said, "There was among what was revealed of the Qur'an (the verse) 'Ten known sucklings create prohibition' (i.e., foster relationship). Then it was abrogated by 'five sucklings', and the Messenger of Allah expired and they were among what was recited of the Qur'an."[30]

Ibn Majah has narrated another *hadith* from 'Aishah which explicitly says that the two verses were lost after the death of the Prophet. She is reported to say: 'The verse of stoning and of suckling an adult ten times were revealed, and they were (written) on a paper and kept under my bed. When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) expired and we were preoccupied with his death, a goat entered and ate away the paper.[31]

It needs no great intelligence to see that this theory of abrogation of recital cannot be of any use in such cases. If a *surah* or verse was recited in the life of the Prophet and then it was lost either because the reciters were killed in a battle, or because a goat devoured it or for any other reason, then the question arises: Who had the right to abrogate a Qur'anic verse after the Prophet's death? Had any other prophet come after Muhammad (peace be on him and his progeny)? That is why Sayyid al-Khu'i has said, "It is clear that the theory of abrogation of recital (*naskhu 't-tilawah*) is exactly the same as belief in alteration in and omission from the Qur'an."[32]

Therefore we have to strictly adhere to the well established principle that any *hadith* going against the Qur'an must be discarded and 'thrown to the wall' - if it cannot be reinterpreted in an acceptable way.

The Shia Attitude

Now we should see how the Shi'as have solved the problem of such *ahadith*.

The Shi'as do not believe in the immunity of any writer, commentator or narrator from mistakes, and, therefore, they do not take any collection of *hadith* to be completely valid and correct. The only book which is completely immune from any mistake is the Qur'an.

There are four early collections of Shi'a *ahadith* which are together called "*al-Kutub al-Arb'ah*" (the four books): *al-Kafi* of Kulayni, *Man la Yahdhuruhu' l-Faqih* of Saduq, *Tahdhibu 'l-Ahkam* and *al-Istibsar* of Tusi. Although these books are held in great esteem, the Shi'as have never called them "*sihah*". Consequently, they are not fettered by any *hadith* written there simply because it is in one of the four books. Instead, they subject all *ahadith* in all these books to strict tests, as to their narrators (*asnad*) and *dirayah*, and examine whether a given *hadith* conforms with the Qur'an, the accepted sayings of the Ma'sumin and the known facts. If a *hadith* passes these tough test, then it is accepted. If not, then it is re-interpreted in an acceptable way, failing which it is rejected outright.

It should be mentioned here that an overwhelming part of traditions concerning *tahrif* is defective and weak as far as their chains of narrators are concerned. Even then, some of those traditions maybe taken to denote that there has occurred misinterpretation in some verses, giving them wrong meaning. Another group of traditions may easily be construed to mention marginal explanatory notes of the reciters.

But there still remain many traditions which cannot be explained in either way. And our scholars unhesitatingly have rejected them because they go against the Qur'an and the sunnah, and are contrary to the *ijma'* of the ummah that there has never been any addition in or omission from the Qur'an.

Muhaqqiq al-Kalbasi has said, "All these reports which speak of *tahrif* are against the *ijma'* of the ummah (with exception of a few insignificant persons)."[33]

The commentator of *al-Wafiyah*, Muhaqqiq al-Baghdadi has clearly stated, by quoting from Muhaqqiq al-Karaki (who has written a complete tract on the subject) that: "The traditions which speak of omission must either be reinterpreted or rejected. Any tradition which is contradictory to the Qur'an, the acknowledged sunnah and the ijma' must be discarded if it has no room for interpretation or justifiable explanation."[34]

A tradition, recorded in *al-Kafi* is quoted here to give an example in practice of what we mean when we speak of reinterpretation or justifiable explanation: Abu 'Abdillah [al-Sadiq] (peace be upon him) said, "The Qur'an which was brought by Jibrail (peace be upon him) to Muhammad (Mercy of Allah be on him and his progeny) is seventeen thousand verses."[35]

Shaykh as-Saduq has written in his *Kitabu'l-Itiqaddat*, what in my view amounts to a reinterpretation of this *hadith*. He writes, "We say that so much of revelation has come down, which is not a part of the Qur'an, that if it were to be collected, its extent would undoubtedly be 17,000 verses. And

this, for example, is like the saying of Gabriel (a.s.) to the Prophet (peace be upon him & his progeny): 'Allah says to thee, O Muhammad, deal gently with My creatures, in the same manner as I do."'

He goes on quoting many such *ahadith qudsiyah* until he concludes by saying: "There are many such (*ahadith qudsiyah*) all of which are revelations, but do not form part of the Qur'an. If they had been (part of the Qur'an), they would surely have been included in it, and not excluded from it."[36]

If one is not prepared to accept this explanation because the tradition speaks about "the Qur'an", then we will discard this *hadith* without hesitation. Although the number (17,000) given in this tradition is much smaller than the one given by the 2nd Caliph (one million and twenty seven thousand letters in the Qur'an),[37] it is never-the-less three times bigger than the actual number of the verses (which is some six thousand two hundred and thirty six verses).[38]

This is the Shi'a method of resolving the problem of the *ahadith* on *tahrif*. Anyone studying it with unbiased mind and heart would readily accept it as the only correct solution for such *ahadith* because it is based on the method formulated by the Prophet (peace be upon him & his progeny) and expressed by Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as follows: "...And so whatever conforms to the Book of Allah, take it; and whatever is contrary to the Book of Allah, leave it .. "[39]

Exploitation of Traditions

As mentioned above, the enemies of Islam had succeeded in circulating such anti-Qur'an traditions in the Muslim world, attributing them to famous personalities of Islam, the companions of the Prophet as well as his Ahlul bayt; and gradually the Muslims unwittingly accepted and recorded these weak, rather forged, *ahadith* in their collections of ahadith. In spite of that, the Muslim '*ulama*', Shi'a and Sunni alike, did not believe that there was any alteration in, addition to, or omission from the Qur'an. No sensible 'alim of either sect accused the other sect that it believed in *tahrif* of the Qur'an.

Of course there have appeared from time to time some '*ulama*' on both sides, who indulged in mudslinging against the opposite sect, not realizing that presence of a *hadith* in a book does not necessarily mean that the people of that group really believed in it. But such traditions remained more or less buried in the books and usually they were not propagated for the simple reason that nobody based his belief on them.

Things abruptly changed in February 1979, when the Iranian nation, under the unparalleled guidance of the late Ayatullah al-'uzma al-Khomeini succeeded in establishing the first truly Islamic government on the earth, centuries after the days of the Imams (a.s.).

Had the Iranian Revolution resulted in a satellite government following the line of the Western or the Eastern ideology, it would have been gladly accepted-or at least, tolerated-by the self-appointed Guardians of "democracy". But, contrary to the conventional wisdom, it chose to follow the line of Islam. Then it raised the slogan of Islamic Unity. By standing against all un-Islamic "isms", and not bowing before anyone except Allah, Ayatullah al-'uzma al-Khomeini and the Iranian leadership gained unsurpassed popularity in the Muslim ummah throughout the world, from Morocco to the Philippines and from Europe to Americas. Down-trodden masses saw with their own eyes that unarmed bare hands had defeated the mightiest war machine in the Middle East. It gave a new heart to the oppressed people even in non-Muslim countries like South Africa. This rapidly spreading influence of 'Khomeinism' alarmed the U.S.A., the paramount chief' of the Western 'tribes'. They started fighting against Iran, through the proxy war, through news media and in political fora.

On another front, they made their clients in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait believe that the call of Islamic Unity was a mortal danger to their crowns. Ordered by their masters, the Wahhabis started an intensely hateful propaganda against 'Khomeinism', Iran and Shi'ism. Hired pens began churning out books, articles and tracts against the Shi'as, saying that the Shi'a were *kafir*, they were *mushrik*, they had their separate Qur'an, and believed this Qur'an of the Muslims to be altered and incomplete. Some of their top employees were Ihsan Ilahi Zaheer and Balighuddeen in Pakistan and Manzoor Ahmad Nu'mani and Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi [40] in India. The last-named case is interesting. Long before the Revolution, he posed as a champion of the Islamic Unity. He is the Chairman of the Muslim Personal Law Board in India with a Shi'a 'alim as his vice-chairman. But he is also a recipient of the 'Faisal Award' of the Saudi dynasty. And no sooner was the slogan of "Neither East nor West, Islam is the Best" 'exported' from

Iran, than he aligned himself with anti-unity forces. He has written in one of his anti-Shi' a booklets that the Shi'as do not believe in the Qur'an, that is why there was no ***hafiz-e-Qur'an*** in the Shi'as. He goes on writing that once when he was invited to Iran, the group was taken to Qum where they visited the house of a Grand Ayatullah. The programme was to start with the recital of the Qur'an, and the son of the Grand Ayatulah, himself an 'alim, stood up, opened the Qur'an and recited some verses from it. Then he says: "In our Sunni faith, even a child memorizes one or two small *surah*s, but that Shi'a *'alim* could not remember even that much. It was because the Shi'as do not believe in the Qur'an."

[Ed: Contrast this with the feats of the six-year old *hafiz* from Iran]

Could anyone expect such childish arguments from such a great person? But it seems that the sound coming from his mouth is 'his master's voice' and the Zionism's dagger dipped in Muslims' blood is used for his pen.

A book written by such agents might be written in Urdu, Arabic or any other language; but within a few months it is translated in all major languages of the Muslim world, and made available everywhere as well as freely distributed to the *hujjaj*.

Ostensibly, the agents of American Islam are doing it to weaken Iran and prevent the Iranian Revolution from influencing the "Muslim Youths" as Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi himself has admitted in the preface of a book. But is this the actual motive of their Masters-the Judeo-Christian enemies of Islam? Obviously, not. The manipulators of the American Islam have exhumed some Shi'a traditions of *tahrif* buried in the books, with the sole aim that the Shi'a would retaliate by publicising the similar traditions found in the Sunni books, and thus the validity of the Qur'an would be questioned, Muslims' faith in this Last Divine Revelation would be destroyed and as a result. Islam would lose its power.

One of the Shi'a 'alims, Mirza Husayn Nuri (d. 1320 AH) had written a book, Faslu 'l-Khitab, in which he had first collected all the traditions of *tahrif* from the Sunni sources, then all the traditions from the Shi'a sources, then drawn his own conclusions which were against the accepted Shi'a belief. No sooner was the book printed than its rebuttal was written; and the book, discredited, remained forgotten and almost unknown even in the Shi'a academic circles. Now, the American Islam has reprinted Faslu 'l-Khitab, but after removing the chapter of the Sunni *ahadith*. They propagate that it is "an authentic Shi'a book" which proves that the Shi'a have no faith in the Qur'an. If these people were really honest, they should have printed the whole book; then their Masters would have been able to "prove" that the entire Muslim ummah did not believe in this Qur'an!!

This demeaning polemics will provide the Christian missionaries with effective arms and ammunitions to shake and rattle the Muslims' faith in the Qur'an. They hope that in this way many Muslims would easily be persuaded to embrace Christianity, and even those who would not convert, would not remain truly Muslim, nor would they follow a Book whose authenticity was doubtful.

Gladstone is reported to have once stood up in the British Parliament with a copy of the Qur'an in his hand; and declared that as long as the

Muslims followed this Book, the British could not subjugate them. He advised his people to use every subterfuge to shake the Muslims' belief in the Qur'an.

That strategy of *kufr* had succeeded in Turkey, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria and many other so-called Muslim countries where a special breed of Muslims has been created which seems to be allergic to Islam and the Qur'an. It was about to succeed in Iran, thanks to the Pahlavi regime. But the plan failed because of the religious leaders under the guidance of the late Ayatullah al-'uzma Khomeini and because of the religiosity of the Iranian nation. Now the enemies of Islam are using this propaganda of *tahrif* to achieve that goal.

This is what they have planned. But Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala*, says:

They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouth, and Allah will surely perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse. (61:8)

References

[1] See the Qur'an 17:88; 11:11; 10:38.

[2] At-Tabrasi. *Al-Ihtijaj* vol I (Najaf: Daru n-Numarn 1966) pp.358-384.

[3] Note the triple emphasis of the nominal clause (*al-jumlatu 'l-ismiyya*), *inna* and *lam at-tak'id*.

[4] *Sahih Muslim*, vol 4 (Beirut 2nd edition. 1972) p 1873. This *hadith* has been narrated by more than 20 companions See also, *Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal* vol. 3 pp 14. 17. 26.59: vol 4. pp 366. 371: vol. 5. pp 182. 189 *Sahih at-Tirmidhi* vol. 3 (chap. "*Manaqib Ahli l-bayt*") p. 200-102

[5] *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3 (Beirut. 1st edition. 19O5/1375)p.1295. Bukhari has given this tradition in four places Vide ,*Sahih Bukhari* (Cairo: 1958)vol. 1 ("Kitabu 'l-ilm: bab kitabatu 'l- ilm) p. 39: vol. 6 ("Bab kitabu 'n-Nabi ila Kasra wa Qaysar) pp 11-12: vol.7 (Kitabu 't-tibb: bab qawli 'l-marid Qumu 'anni') pp. 155-156: vol. 9 ("Kitabu l-itisam bi l-kitab wa s-sunnah: bab karahiyyati 'l-khilaf') p. 137.

[6] Al-Khui, *al-Bayan Tafsiri 'l-Qur'an* (Kuwait. 1399/1979) p. 271.

[7] As-Saduq, *Kitabu 'I-Itiqadat*. (Tehran: 1370 AH) p. 63. See also its translation The Shi'ite Creed, tr. A.A.A. Fyzee (Calcutta: 1942) p. 85

[8] Shaykh 'Abbas al Qummi, *Safinatu 'l-Bihar*, vol. 2 p. 474. Countless ahadith to this effect may be seen in the books of both sects, including *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1 (kitabu l- ilm: bab ithm man kadhiba 'ala n-Nabi) p. 38.

[9] *Nahju 'l-Balaghah* (translated by S. Ali Raza), vol. 2 (Tehran: WOFIS, 1987), pp. 453-545.

[10] Ibn Abi l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahji 'l-Balaghah*, vol. 11 (Cairo: Daru 'l-Ihyai 'l-Kutubi 'l-Arabiyyah) pp. 446.

[11] Ibid, vol. 4. p. 63.

[12] Ibid, vol. 4. p. 73

[13] al Bayan, p. 37: Ahmad Amin, Fajru 'l-Islam, p. 215.

[14] at-Tabari, Tarikh at-Tabari, vol. 6 (Beirut: Mu'assasatu l-A'lami) p. 299: Ibn al-Athir, Tarikh al-Kamil, vol. 5 (Daru l-Kutubi l-Arabi. 1985) p. 39.

[15] As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol. 5, pp. 179-180; As-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, vol. 2. p. 25.

[16] Al-Bukhari, *at-Ta'rikh*, as quoted by as-Suyuti in the above books.

[17] Az-Zamakhshari, *Tafsir al-Kashshaf*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Lees. 1856) p. 1117: Mulla Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanzu 'l-Ummal*.

[18] As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol. 5. p. 179.

[19] As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol. 3. p. 208: *al-Itqan,* vol. 2. p. 26: al-Hakim an-Nishapuri, *al-Mustadrak alas-Sahihan*, vol. 2 (Hyderabad: Dairatul-Ma'arif. 1340 AH) p. 331.

[20] As-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, vol. 1, p. 65.

[21] As-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, vol. 1, p. 65.

[22] *Ibid*, pp. 25-26.

[23] As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol 1 p 105: Ibn al-Athir. *Jami 'u 'l-Usul*, vol 3 (Egypt: 1370 AH) p. 8 *hadith* no. 904.

[24] *Musabbihat*: those *surah*s which begin with the words. *yusabbihu* or *sabbih.*

[25] *Jami 'u 'l-usul*, vol. 3. p. 8

[26] As-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, vol. 2. p 70.

[27] As-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, vol 2. p. 25: As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol 1. p. 106.

[28] For details, see Mir Hamid Husayn al-Musawi al-Hindi, *Istiqsa'u 'l-Ifham,* vol. 2 (Lucknow) the section on *tahrif* of the Qur'an

[29] For the verse of stoning. see *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol 4. p 179. 265: *Sahih Muslim*,vol. 3. p. 1317: *Musnad* Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol 1 (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami. 1969) p. 40: *Sunan Ibn Majah*, vol. 2 (Cairo edition) p 853: *Muwatta,* Imam Malik, vol 2.p 623.For the verse of suckling, see: *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4. p. 167: As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol. 2. p.

[30] *Sahih Muslim*, vol 1. p. 167: As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*, vol2. p. 135.

[31] *Musnad* Ahmad bin Hanbal. vol. 6. p. 269: *Sunan Ibn Majah*, p. 626: Ibn Qutbah, *Tawil Mukhtalafi 'l-Hadith* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyya. 1966) p. 310 which has been misprinted as 210-: As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur,* vol. 2. p. 13.

[32] *al Bayan ,* p. 224.

[33] Quoted in *al Bayan*, p. 253

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] al Kulayni, *al Kafi*, vol. 2 (Tehran: a; Matba'a al Islamiyya, 1388), p. 463

[36] Saduq, *Kitabu 'l-Itiqadat,* p. 63-65

[37] As-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, vol. 2, p. 70

[38] See Mahmud Ruhani, *al Mu'jamu 'l Ihsai* (Mashad: 1990) p. 168. Those who do note take the trouble of counting, go on writing that there are 6666 verses in the Qur'an. It is one more example of Muslims tragic carelessness towards the Qur'an.

[39] al Hurr al Amili, *Wasailu 'sh Shiah*, vol. 3 (Kitabu 'l qadha: bab wujuhi 'l jam bayna 'l ahadithi 'l mukhtalifah), p. 380

[40] Died in 1994.